

The Summary of the 2008 Act Amendments

Wetlands Reserve Program

- Add a new enrollment method for tribal lands through 30-year contracts.
- Expand land eligibility under WRP to cropland or grassland that was used for agricultural production prior to flooding from the natural overflow of a closed basin lake or pothole, as determined by the Secretary, together (where practicable) with the adjacent land that is functionally dependent on the cropland or grassland.
- Require that an easement cannot be created on land that changed ownership within the previous 7 year period. Previously, the ownership requirement was for 12 months;
- Limit eligible land to private or tribal land;
- Add, restoration, protection and enhancement of wetlands as WRP purposes;
- Revise the authority for the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program;
- Require NRCS to conduct a survey of the prairie pothole regions to inform the allocation process of WRP funds to the region.
- Base easement compensation on the lowest of three values: The fair market value of the land determined through either an appraisal or market analysis; a geographic cap; or the landowner offer;
- Establish an easement compensation payment schedule depending upon the value of the easement.
- Require a yearly payment limitation for restoration cost-share agreements of \$50,000 per year and to clarify that the \$50,000 yearly restoration cost-share payment limitation applies to any person or legal entity.
- Extend the existing waiver of the \$50,000 yearly payment limitation to 30-year contracts;
- Identify that maintenance is an activity eligible for cost-share assistance;
- Add ranking criteria regarding maximizing environmental benefits; and
- Allow the spraying or mowing of land enrolled in the program if necessary to meet habitat needs of specific wildlife species.